Allen Jordan's Death

"It matters not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game".

The Wednesday night league was always exciting. The best teams played on Wednesday, so my sister and I always went to watch that night. There was only five more weeks of league play before the trophies were awarded. They were so different this your, a desk set with pen and a clock, with the traditional bowling figure.

Chick's Cafe team was tied for first place with American Oil, but five more weeks of play could mean anybody's ball game. Gus was the star bowler. Some men thought Gus should go professional; his avarage score was 198. He had always excelled in sports. He was on the main team in high school, he had bowled on the college team; he was good at golf, and had coached one year of basket ball for the Park City high school. His school teaching job and his night classes, two nights a week at the University of Utah, kept him too busy to get in much practice, although he was co-owner and manager of Holiday Lanes

Every time one of the pin-setters stuck or the pins had to be re-set Gus would run down to the back of the lanes and adjust the machines or set the pins and run back to bowl his turn.

We used to comment on how the men would put their arms around Gus's shoulders while they talked to him. He was everyone's friend. People would say, when Gus wasn't there the heart of the bowling alley was gone.

People came to the bowling alley to enjoy themselves and that is just what they did. Laughing, joking, playing and kidding was the usual thing at the Holiday Lanes, especially on league nights. Wives of the players came down to watch and cheer their husbands strikes and boo their mistakes. Children met in the play room with their little friends that they would see only on bowling nights and they looked foreward to these occasions as much as did their parents.

The girls at the snak bar were kept busy carrying soft drinks to the bowlers and frying hamburgers for the few men whose wives were going to club that night and didn't want to cook dinner at home, as they usually ate at club; Besides, the snak bar was noted for their good food and home made pies.

The unlucky bowler whose score totaled 111 in the eleventh frame had to buy the cokes for his team, and the bowler who scored over two hundred was given a big hand by the entire house.

Some of the "side shows" were better than the main attraction. The nightly appearance of the town's most eligible widows for their cup of coffee and small talk with some of the more daring souls, whose wives were not present that night. They added color to the scene; one week they were blonds, the next week some were brunets or red-heads, there was never a dull moment at Holiday Lanes.

As we wached the bowlers, and especially my son, Allen, or "Gus", as he had been nick-named in grade school, I thought he looked especially tired that night. He wasn't bowling his usual high scores and he walked instead of run when he went to reset pins or adjust the pin setting machines.

When we got home later that night I made the remark to my husband that I wished Allen would slow down, he was either working too hard or he wasn't well He was pale and thin. Allen's father said he had noticed the same thing and he had exacted a promise from Allen that he would see a doctor. Allen had been going to a dentist with bleeding gums but it didn't seem to be getting any better.

The next day, Thursday, Allen didn't go to school. He and his wife, Sharon, went to Salt Lake to see Allen's doctor. Sharon came back alone and reported that Allen was to stay in the hospital a few days for tests. I wasn't too concerned, he had been in the hospital several times over the past few years for routine check-ups, and I hoped they would soon find his trouble and start the necessary treatments. No one had mentioned trench-mouth, but I had heard that bleeding gums were an indication of that disease; and I was sure that one of the "wonder drugs" could soon cure that and that he would be home by Saturday. When Sharon came home Saturday, alone again, She said they were doing more tests and they wouldn't have the results until Monday.

The week end was a bad time to go into the hospital, I thought. The nurses and most of the doctors took the week end off, leaving the interns and student nurses to run the hospital. There was nothing to do but wait.

That evening we rode down to the St. Mark's hospital to see our boy and cheer him up. When a person isn't critically ill he likes company. I was surprised to see Allen so pale and listless, content to be lying in bed watching televison. I thought he would be restlessly pacing the floor, anxious to get home.

We tried to joke about things at home, the bowling alley, the cute things his little boy had said; but he was in a more serious mood ; he talked of the tests the doctors had taken, of the blood tests, the bone marrow tests, his school, the bookkeeping at the bowling alley and the classes he was taking at the University of Utah two nights a week. To pasify him we promised to bring his books to him, it would give him something to do.

As I kissed him good night he said,"Mother, I keep thinking of Gary Holm".

I was stuned, I said,"Oh, Allen, you don't have a symptom like Gary had".

All the way home I too thought of Gary Holm. He was Allen's boy-hood friend who had died of cancer a few months ago. A young man, just out of college and his illness was a long, slow, painful death.

The next day Sharon left early to spend the day with Allen. She brought the children up to stay with us, as there was no school, and before she left for Salt Lake she said, "There is a starling in our basement, I don't know how it got in; I left the window open so it could get out".

My grandmother used to say that a bird flying into the house meant death. A silly superstition that I dismissed from my mind without mentioning it.

About two hours later Sharon called us from the hospital; she was crying and almost incoherent. Between sobs she told us that the doctors had verified the tests as definitely leukemia. "Yes, they were sure, yes, they had told Allen". The doctors were very encouraging; they said they had patients whom they had been treating for ten years, and who were leading a normal life.

There was no cure, but scientists and doctors were working on it around the world and if Europe found something helpful we would have it the next day.

We tried to be cheerful and optomistic for the children's sake and Sharon's.

They moved Allen up to the University Hospital and placed him under the care of Doctor Cartwright, a cancer specialist.

We visited Allen every day. He tried to be cheerful, he joked with the nurses and friends who came to see him.

A little colored nurse never could get his name right until he said,"Jordan Jordan, just like the Jordan River".

"Oh, Mistah Jaw-dan". And her laugh was low and mellow as she adjusted the clamps on the transfusion bottle and gently moved his arm to a more comfortable position.

The next morning, Friday, Sharon Called,"Please come quickly and bring the Elders, Allen is much worse".

I called Bishop Smith again, he was always so willing to go. He offered to drive us in his car and we gratefully accepted his offer. We were both too upset to drive. My husband and I sat in the front seat and I kept wondering why the Bishop drove so slowly, but every time I looked at the speedometer it registered between seventy five and eighty miles an hour.

When we arrived at the hospital Allen was shouting and Sharon and two nurse were trying to calm him. His eye was so blood-shot that you couldn't see the pupil, his face was swollen and he was trying to get out of bed, as he shouted "Two weeks! two weeks! and all they do is stall!"

A doctor came in and gave him a shot and asked us to step out into the hall for a few minutes. The bishop sat down on a chair and put his head down by his knees; he said he sometimes had passed out when the odor of the hospital was so strong. I hadn't noticed it myself, but when we went back into Allen's room the odor was sickening. He had pulled the needle out of the vein and the blood had soaked the gause holding his arm to the small board-like arm rest.

The doctor said Allen's nerves were just about to the breaking point. No Wonder, I thought, Allen never raised his voice, he was always so patient, and he had tried so hard to keep up a cheerful front for his wife's sake.

The Bishop and Allen's Father laid their hands on Allen's head,"Our Father in heaven...." Allen closed his eyes and laid his head back on the pillow. A calm peaceful feeling seemed to fill the room. The Bishop's voice was calm and reverent. He finished his prayer, "....Thy will be done, Amen".

Allen's voice was barely audible,"Amen". Then in a stronger voice,"Thanks, Bishop and Dad".

I fumbled for my handkerchief, I didn't want Allen to see me crying. I stayed with Sharon at the hospital and his Dad went home with Bishop Smith. I left about five o'clock with our daughter and son-in-law.

When we arrived at the hospital the next day we were told that Allen had developed pneumonia, a common reaction to blood transfusions, but he was responding well to treatment and anti-biotics. His chart showed a temperature of 104 degrees earlier in the morning, but was now 102 degrees. Two nurses wrung strips of gauze out of a pan of water and alcohol and were laying them on his body. An oxygen mask covered his nose and mouth. His eyes were closed. An I.V. slowly dripped into his veins.

When the nurses left I stood by his bed and held his hand, his grip was strong; the perspiration stood on his face and neck. I wiped his face with a tissue. I thought how many times I had washed his face when he was a little boy, and how many times I had soaped his arms and legs and small plump body in the tub, making him into a "white rabbit".

He didn't open his eyes. I watched his slow, even breathing and prayed.

His wife and our other son and daughter-in-law came down in the evening. They told me to go home and get some rest and they would tell us of any change in his condition. The nurses said he was responding well to treatment and they would stay with Allen all night.

I kissed his cheek and the thought crossed my mind, good night, sweet prince -Where had I read or heard that before?

I was just dozing off to sleep when the phone rang. I heard my husband say "Oh, no." I knew our boy was gone. Bill's voice continued, "Yes, I'll call the mortuary".

It had been just ten days- acute leukemia and pneumonia. He was so young, so vital, so intelligent, why? why?

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord

DeEsta Jordan, May, 1967